Introduction to the Rules of Conduct for Attorneys, Agents, and Veterans Service Representatives



Project Title	Introduction to the Rules of Conduct for Attorneys, Agents, and Veterans Service Representatives
Project Summary	Familiarize yourself with the professional responsibilities expected of individuals who represent Veterans before VA and make an immediate, positive impact on Veteran's lives by helping to ensure they receive competent, qualified representation on their claims.
Country	United States

Project Description

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Accreditation and Discipline Program is part of VA's Office of General Counsel and oversees organizations and individuals providing representation before VA. The purpose of the Accreditation and Discipline Program is to ensure that claimants receive responsible, qualified representation in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of their claims for VA benefits. This program is comparable to a State Court or Bar Association that licenses attorneys to practice law within its jurisdiction, but on a National level. Currently, there are 9,300 representatives of veteran service organizations (VSOs), 9,000 attorneys, and 500 claims agents accredited with VA to assist veterans with their benefits claims. The program is responsible for reviewing accreditation applications, monitoring conduct of VA-accredited individuals, investigating complaints, issuing decisions on the reasonableness of fees, and removing accreditation when necessary.

To ensure that the representatives, attorneys, and agents continue to meet the requirements for VA accreditation, they must comply with the ongoing reporting requirements. Unfortunately, many of these individuals are delinquent on their ongoing reporting requirements, and thus, our office must take appropriate steps to notify them of their delinquency and VA's intent to remove their accreditation if the delinquency is not corrected. As one of the interns with OGC's Accreditation, Discipline, & Fees program, you will be tasked with analyzing program data, developing and executing a plan to notify these individuals of VA's intent to suspend their VA accreditation, addressing incoming email inquiries and phone calls, updating our data system accordingly, and presenting the results of the project to OGC leadership.

Required Skills or Interests

Skill(s)	

Data analysis

Data visualization

Editing and proofreading

Writing

Additional Information

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has delegated the responsibilities associated with recognizing veterans service organizations (VSOs) and accrediting individuals—VSO representatives, attorneys, and claims agents—for the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of VA benefits claims to the Office of General Counsel, and the General Counsel has delegated such responsibilities to the Accreditation and Discipline Program within the Benefits Law Group. The Benefits Law Group is headed by the Chief Counsel of Benefits Law and three Deputies, one of whom oversees the day-to-day operations of the Accreditation and Discipline Program. The current Benefits Law Group staff includes 14 attorneys and 5 paralegals. In addition to managing the Accreditation & Discipline Program, the Benefits Law Group provides the Department legal advice on matters related to claim adjudications and appeals, compensation, pensions, and survivors' benefits, burial benefits, appointment and removal of fiduciaries, vocational rehabilitation and employment, and education benefits. The attorneys also represent the Department in benefits litigation before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

Additional information on VA accreditation can be located at: https://www.va.gov/ogc/accreditation.asp.

Language Requirements

None